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Our goals

The *Silvertown Standard & the Miner* is a weekly newspaper written for people interested in the issues and news of Silverton, Colo., and the surrounding San Juan Mountains region. The *Standard* voices a strong sense of community for Silverton and the San Juans as it brings you the issues, characters, landscapes, and the talent of the region. Stressing in-depth, balanced, and thoughtful writing, news, photography, and topical articles on key issues affecting the region, the *Standard* keeps the greater San Juan community informed, entertained, provoked, and engaged in dialogue about the community and its future.



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ASSOCIATION

2011 Member

Colorado Press Association winner:

- Best news content for a small weekly, 2007;
- Best photos and design, 2008.

2010 CPA awards:

- Best Business Story
- Best Education Story
- Best Headline Writing
- Best News Page Design
- Best Editorial Layout & Design
- Best Photo Essay
- Best Special Section
- Best Newspaper Promotion

Asking the right questions

By John Poole

A week ago we had two representatives from the EPA and another from the State of Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) in town to take community input about increased discharges into Cement Creek since early 2003.

At that time Sunnyside Gold Corp. was granted a consent decree by the Colorado Water Quality Control Division to transfer its discharge permit to Gold King Mines. The 2003 transfer of responsibility for treating discharges from the American Tunnel at Gladstone was part of a much larger agreement between Sunnyside, Gold King and San Juan Corp..

Unfortunately, by the following November (2004) Gold King was no longer able to fulfill its obligations under the consent agreement and it shut down its water treatment plant at Gladstone, allowing untreated water to flow directly into Cement Creek.

GUEST OPINION

At the time that it shut down its water treatment operation, Gold King was in violation of its allowed metal releases and its state reporting and bonding requirements. The flow of untreated water from the American Tunnel continues to this date.

There is nothing simple about the events that have brought us to the current situation. The full background is beyond the scope of this column.

Alan Prendergast, in his ironically titled article, "What Lies Beneath" published in *Westword* in September 2005, traced the flow of events from the closing of the American Tunnel after the Sunnyside mine shutdown in 1991 through the consent decree and complex agreement between Sunnyside, Gold King and San Juan Corporation until Gold King's failure in 2004 to carry out its responsibilities under the agreement.

I spent last week asking the EPA and CDPHE representatives as many questions as I could think of and then taking the Animas Stakeholders (ARSG) tour of remediated sites in the Mineral and Cement Creek drainages. As one might expect, the topic of a possible cleanup of the American Tunnel runoff into Cement Creek and how it might be conducted came up during the course of our activities.

There were some strong concerns about Superfund involvement and the restrictions and litigation that might accompany such an approach. At the same time there were doubts expressed about the ability of a community-based organization such as ARSG to raise the necessary funds to carry out what appears to be a very expensive project.

So, we are now faced with some serious alternatives, driven by the worsening discharges into Cement Creek and the looming concerns of EPA for a solution.

We can express our support

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FROM THE STANDARD MAIL CAR



EPA highlights facts

Editor;

The Environmental Protection Agency appreciates the ongoing discussion in Silverton regarding mining-related contamination and deteriorating water quality in the Animas River. These are important issues and we are eager to engage with the community and to work with you. However, we would also like to highlight some facts.

EPA had no role in the decision to plug the American Tunnel or to stop water treatment. Actually, we expressed serious concerns about plugging the tunnel in 1993.

There are naturally high levels of metals such as aluminum and iron in parts of the Red Mountain District. However, there are higher metals loads — copper, cadmium, lead, manganese and zinc — that can be attributed to uncontrolled mine discharges since the American Tunnel was plugged and water treatment ceased. This fact is well documented in assessments done by both EPA and the Animas River Stakeholders Group.

EPA has collaborated with Silverton residents on water quality concerns since the 1990s. The community requested that EPA not use Superfund listing to address contamination. EPA listened, and since then has consistently supported the Animas River Stakeholders Group with money, EPA staff resources, and actions that complemented community-led efforts to improve water quality.

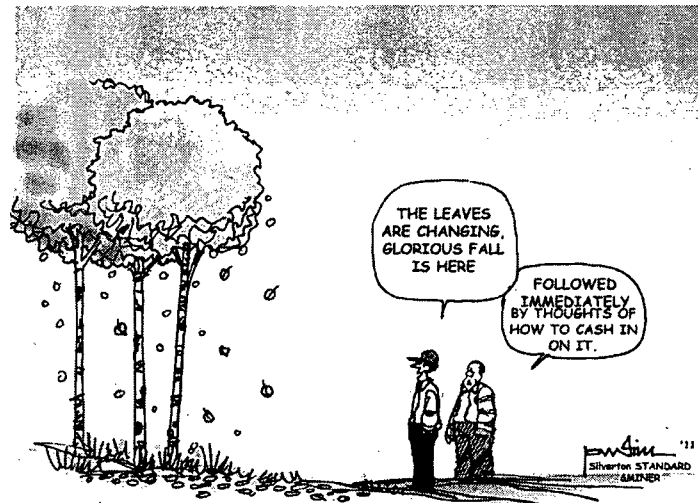
EPA believes that after 15 years, it is time to do more to address the water quality problems. Despite some progress in parts of the watershed, water quality has deteriorated in upper Cement Creek, and it has become clear that action is needed to reverse this trend. Identifying effective solutions will include a careful evaluation of treatment methods and the best ways to manage residual wastes, including sludge.

EPA's interest is improved water quality. We embrace the ongoing dialogue about the problem and next steps to developing an effective and implementable plan for improving water quality, and we look forward to exchanging more information and ideas in upcoming town meetings and other forums.

Sincerely,

Carol Campbell Assistant Regional Administrator
Office of Ecosystems, Protection and Remediation

See LETTERS, Page 9



The magnificence of autumn

By Freddie Canfield

The slopes surrounding Silverton are in their glory. Clear nights and temperatures in the 20s have brought fall colors to their peak. We have experienced only moderate cloud build afternoons and no recordable precipitation for 10 days.

Daytime highs have been consistently in the mid-60s to mid-70s. What a perfect counterpoint to all of the precipitation that we experienced this summer!

Dawn's early light is no longer so early. The hour of 6 a.m. is when night turns into day. During the hour of 7 p.m. stars and darkness descend upon us.

This time of year early morning outings really wake up your senses. As you head up slope gold, scarlet and deeper shades of red mingle with ever-diminishing shades of green. Streams and waterfalls have lost the intensity of monsoon season and now flow placidly. Gooseberries and raspberries become ever farther apart along trail.

Our final Farmers Market of the season was filled with goodbyes and thank you's for all who participated. Last of the late summer produce will remind us of what a blessing it is to have our

WEATHER AND OBSERVATIONS

Date	High	Low	Precip., conditions
Sept. 21	65	27	Clear
Sept. 22	69	25	Clear
Sept. 23	73	25	Virtually clear
Sept. 24	74	28	Clear
Sept. 25	68	26	Clear
Sept. 26	69	26	Virtually clear
Sept. 27	73	28	Clear

friends from down the mountain come up to Memorial Park each Tuesday to share with us.

Warm afternoons brought a number of our musician friends out of doors. Included in this joyful experience are Carol Chance, along with Connie and Doug Bishop. That perennial troubadour, Scott Craig, has also been playing under the sun lately.

There will be plenty of music to enjoy and also participate in as we transition ever more closely towards That Other Season yet to come.

May the magnificent beauty of autumn bring joy to all of you. Get out there while it is still with us!

Write to us

The *Silvertown Standard & the Miner* welcomes letters to the editor. Send letters via e-mail to editor@silvertonstandard.com, or via snail mail to, Editor, *Silvertown Standard & the Miner*, P.O. Box 8, Silverton, CO 81433.

POOLE, from Page 2

to the governor for Superfund listing. The governor would then have to request a listing from EPA. We were told by Sabrina Forrest, Denver EPA site assessment manager, that under this scenario Cement Creek would receive a high priority for Colorado sites.

We can consider an alternate solution for remediating the Cement Creek runoff. One example might be for a community-based group such as ARSG to design and carry out its own cleanup with public and private funding.

Or, we can do nothing.

There are many questions and concerns about each of the above alternatives. But, as one long-time Silvertonian observed to me, the last alternative, doing nothing, is not a viable option. Worsening conditions in Cement Creek and the downstream drainage will continue the EPA's pressure for a solution. Also, as I was told by another long-time Silvertonian in the mining industry, no large company will invest in a San

Juan mining operation until we have resolved this situation.

As for Superfund, there are now 24 sites in Colorado — one as close as Creede. So we have an ample source of input from towns that have already experienced Superfund projects to help guide our decision. Among the local concerns that I heard last week were: the fear of EPA litigation and the accompanying costs; the loss of local control in selecting contractors to do the work; the lack of flexibility in addressing the most cost effective technology of remediation; the public relations concern of having a Superfund site near town; the possible negative effect on future mining in San Juan County; and, the fear of driving away investors from Colorado Goldfields.

While I am not taking a position on the validity of any of these concerns, they must still be addressed.

I also heard many concerns about a community-based organization taking on a Cement Creek cleanup (i.e. return to the stable runoff levels achieved by Sunnyside prior to transfer of water processing to Gold King).

The principal question is: Where will the money come from for a project that could cost as much as \$50 million over 10 years and employ 10 to 15 people indefinitely, as estimated by one of the CDPHE representatives?

There was also some concern about whether a local organization would have the technical expertise to carry out such an ambitious project. Finally, as in any small community, there is concern about conflict of interest. As an example, the owner of Gold King, the company ultimately responsible for the currently unprocessed Gladstone runoff, is now a member of the Animas River Stakeholders Group

as well as an engineering consultant for Colorado Goldfields. Again, I want to stress that I am not taking a position on these concerns, but we must resolve them.

I think that we still have a lot of homework to do. The best decisions are those that are well-informed and not based on hearsay or misinformation. We all have a stake in the successful outcome of a Cement Creek runoff remediation.

Whoever takes on the project and whatever form it takes, Silverton will receive a short-term economic boost in jobs and local investment with a possible addition of some new town residents and students in our school system.

If water quality of Cement Creek is returned to the level achieved by Sunnyside before the consent agreement, the entire Animas Basin will share the bene-

fits.

I hope that we shall continue to examine the pros and cons of the alternatives available to us without any delay and address both the concerns that I heard expressed and those that I may still be unaware of.

We need more specific information from both EPA and any local group that might come forward about: the form of its project, how it would be implemented and financed, what its expected outcome is, and a timeframe for its completion. Then, we can move forward with an intelligent decision.

I welcome any reasonable comments or criticisms to my observations above. I don't pretend to know as much as some longtime locals about this issue or the history that preceded it.

John Poole is a resident of Silverton.

LETTERS, from Page 2**Zeke is right about natural mineralization**

Editor;

Thank you, Zeke, for the comments on natural minerals loading into Cement Creek. I certainly echo your comments that "one needs only to drive up Cement Creek and look at the banks of the creek."

Silverton should be on notice that there is an agenda on the minds of EPA. Anyone that follows EPA and their methods to accomplish their objectives can see it clearly.

The real issue is that Silverton needs to take the lead on EPA's efforts and not let Durango lead the way. Wake up Silverton!

Harley Murray, Silverton

Thanks again, to the Silverton Ambulance crew for saving my grandson's life

Editor;

Thank you for trusting me to mail the money for my advertisement thanking Silverton Ambulance Service personnel for saving my grandson's life!

He will have heart surgery Oct. 6. Thanks to Kyle Mesich and Lee Gillon my grandson is alive!

Kyle and Lee diagnosed him with exactly what the pediatric cardiologist did at University of New Mexico Hospital in Albuquerque. Please pass this on to Kyle and Lee.

I was glad when we got back to Silverton after the emergency room trip. I felt safer with Kyle and Lee living near Adrian.

Cynthia Allen, Las Cruces, N.M.

**You may
have won
a free
kitten!**
See notice
on Page 11

**CLOSING THE
BLINDS HELPED
ME ENJOY
A MOVIE.**

When it's cold outside,
I keep my heat in by
closing blinds and curtains.
It's nothing huge, but it's worth the
effort. It's also worth two tickets to a
blockbuster movie. Find out what you
can do at TogetherWeSave.com.



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